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A LETTER

ON

PAUPER LUNATIC

Asylums,

BY

SAMUEL TUKE.

New-York:

PRINTED BY SAMUEL WOOD & SONS.

1815.



THE Governors of the New-York Hospital, conceiving that the very judicious remarks and sentiments contained in the following letter, might be highly useful to the community, as well as to the institution with which they are connected, have requested the same to be published. The work alluded to in the letter, called, "Practical hints on the construction, and economy of Pauper Asylums," is believed to be one of the most valuable and interesting works of the kind ever published. This work was sent by the author to one of the Governors, and is now deposited in the Hospital library. It is very desirable that it should be republished in this country; but as such republication would be expensive, on account of the few copies that would be wanted, the Governors have directed, that if any person, or trustees of any public institution, in any part of the United States, should be desirous of obtaining a copy of this very valuable work, with a view to aid them in erecting a similar Asylum, or the improvement of any already established, that a manuscript copy shall be furnished them, upon an application to the subscriber,

THOMAS EDDY.

New-York, 12th month, 20th, 1815.

YORK, 7mo. 17th, 1815.

TO THOMAS EDDY,

OUR mutual friend, L. Murray, has put into my hands a letter and pamphlet, lately received from thee, respecting the erection of an asylum for lunatics near New-York. He has wished me to make any remarks which may occur to me on the perusal ; but, having just published a few hints on the construction and economy of Pauper Lunatic Asylums, which contain much of the information thou requests, I shall have but little to add. Those hints, however, relating to institutions for the poorest class of society, must be applied with some modifications to establishments for persons of different previous habits, and for whom a greater portion of attendance can be afforded. The great objects, however, which are stated in the hints to be so important for the comfort of lunatics, apply equally to those of all ranks and classes.

From the sum you propose to receive from the patients, intended to occupy the

new building, I conclude you are providing for patients of the middle ranks of life, a class hardly less to be commiserated, when thus afflicted, than the very poorest, since the expense and difficulty of private management, may bring to ruin a respectable family, as well as expose it to great personal dangers. There would, I think, be considerable objection to the accumulation of 40 patients of this class, in three contiguous rooms, as proposed in the hints for pauper lunatics. You purpose building for 50 patients, and as you probably intend to accommodate both sexes, the number of each sex may be very suitable for the accommodation of three contiguous rooms, which, of course, need not be so large as those in the Wakefield Asylum. It would be difficult to offer a detailed plan, without knowing more than we do of your local circumstances, and the classes of patients you purpose to admit. I doubt, however, whether you can do better than adopt the general form of the Wakefield Asylum, and, as you are providing for only a small number, it deserves consideration whether all the rooms might not be advantageously placed on the ground floor. This plan affords great facilities to easy inspection, and safe com-

munication with airing grounds, and the roof might project so far over the building, as to form an excellent colonnade for the patients ; which seems peculiarly desirable under an American Sun.

With these views, I send a sketch drawn by the Architect whose plan is to be adopted at Wakefield ; and though it may not be, in many respects, adapted to your particular wants, yet I hope it will not be altogether useless. Should it be thought too expensive, I think the rooms, 1, 2, and 3, might be dispensed with, and rooms marked "*attendants, sick, and bath,*" might be appropriated to the patients during the day. The attendants room is not a requisite, though it has been thought that it would be more agreeable to patients of superior rank, not to have the society of a servant. This, however, chiefly applies to the convalescents, and these might occupy the room marked '*sick,*' whilst the middle class, and the attendants, would be very suitably placed in the larger room in the centre, marked "*attendants.*" A sick and bath room might probably be obtained in the galleries : if you are inclined for the sake of appearance, to make the centre building two stories high, you might bring the wings nearer to the centre, and accommodate most of the convales-

cent patients with bed rooms in the upper story. In this case, perhaps it would be desirable to give the wings a radiating form. You will however be best able to modify the sketch to your particular wants, if the general idea should meet your approbation.

I observe with pleasure, that one leading feature of your new institution, is the introduction of employment amongst the patients, an object which I am persuaded is of the utmost importance in the moral treatment of insanity. It is related of an institution in Spain, which accommodated all ranks, and in which the lower class were generally employed, that a great proportion of these recovered, whilst the number of the *Grandeos* was exceedingly small. It will however require great address to induce patients to engage in manual labour, who have not been accustomed to it previously to their indisposition, and it must be admitted, that where the reluctance on the part of the patient is great, the irritation which compulsory means are likely to excite, will probably be more injurious to the patient, than the exercise will be beneficial. The employment of insane persons should, as far as it is practicable, be adapted to their previous habits, inclinations and capacities, and, though hor-

gricultural pursuits may be most desirable, the greatest benefit will, I believe, be found to result from the patient being engaged in that employment in which he can most easily excel, whether it be an active or a sedentary one. If it be the latter, of course sufficient time should be allotted to recreation in the air. Some persons imagine, that exercises of diversion, are equally beneficial with those that are useful. The latter appear to me to possess a decided preference, by imparting to the mind that calm feeling of satisfaction, which the mere arts of amusement, though not to be neglected, can never afford. To the melancholy class, this is an important distinction between amusing and useful employments, and labour is to be preferred for the maniacal class as less calculated to stimulate the already too much excited spirits.

It is proposed that the new asylum should be placed a few miles from the city. The visitors to it, (I do not mean the medical ones) will, I presume, be residents in New-York, and from what I have seen of the zeal of persons under such appointments in this country, it appears desirable, to render the performance of this duty, so important for the welfare of asylums, as easy as it can be with propriety. One

mile perhaps would not be objectionable, and might probably afford as good air and retirement, as a greater distance.

I need hardly say, I was much gratified to find by the pamphlet, that the importance of moral treatment in the cure of insanity, was duly appreciated in America. When we consider, as Lord Bacon observes, speaking of common diseases, that "all wise physicians in the prescription, of their regimen to their patients, do ever consider *accidentia animi*, as of great force to further or hinder remedies or recoveries;" it is difficult to account for the general neglect of moral considerations in the treatment of deranged mind. I hope, however, though in many instances medicine may not be employed with advantage, and its indiscriminate use has been seriously injurious, that we shall not abandon it as altogether useless, in what we term diseases of the mind. All the varieties included under this general term, have been produced by physical causes: by external accidents, by intoxication, the improper use of medicines, repelled eruptions, obstructed secretions, &c. In some instances, dissection has discovered, after death, the cause of the mental affection, and though, in many instances, no physical cause can be detected, yet, when it is

considered, how limited are the investigations of the anatomist, and that the art is so imperfect, that diseases occasioning instant death, cannot always be discovered on the most minute dissection, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that the body is in all cases the true seat of the disease.

All I would infer from this speculation is, the importance of having *judicious* medical attendants, to watch the progress of the disorder, to be ready to apply their art as bodily symptoms may arise, and to ascertain, with greater precision than has hitherto been done, “how and how far the humours and effects of the body, do alter and work upon the mind ; and how far the passions and apprehensions of the mind, do alter and work upon the body.” Even if the disease is not *confined* to the corporal organs of mind, but extends to the pure and eternal intelligence, medical aid may still be useful from the well known reciprocal action of the two parts of our system upon each other.

I hope my unknown friend will excuse the length and freedom of this letter: its length has much exceeded my intentions, yet I may have omitted information which the experience of the Retreat might afford, and which would have been useful to promoters of the New-York Asylum.

Should this be the case, I shall be glad to answer, as well as I am able, any questions which they may propose ; and, with the best wishes for the success of their benevolent and important undertaking,

I remain, respectfully,

Thy friend
SAMUEL TUKE.

Med. Hist.

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